

# MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## Guidance on Virtual Learning - Educational Alternatives

There are many virtual learning options available for pupils in a traditional high school setting in which most or all of the instruction takes place in the school building itself during the regular school day. Many school districts are offering non-traditional courses, such as classes via the Internet, which may not require regular attendance or the typical amount of “seat time” required of most classes included on a pupil’s schedule.

Examples of current practice involving traditional pupils include:

- C “Distance Learning” opportunities have been available to pupils under cooperative arrangements among districts for years and have not posed a problem for pupil accounting. In these situations, there is two-way communication between the teacher of record and the pupils, via television monitors, even though the teacher is physically remotely located from the pupils. An adult is required to be in the classroom with the pupils.
- C Computer or Internet courses in which pupils participate during the school day while in attendance in the school building pose no problem for pupil accounting because the pupils are in regular daily attendance.
- C Courses taken as a part of dual enrollment through a postsecondary institution also pose no problem since “seat time” and the location of the class are not issues in counting dual enrollment classes toward a pupil’s membership.

### Virtual Classes:

Interest is growing in offering options to pupils to take *virtual* classes providing pupils with the **flexibility to participate outside of the regular school day and/or off-site**. Following are minimum guidelines for generating state aid for that portion of a pupil’s schedule that reflects a course which does not require regularly scheduled “seat time” in the school building. NOTE: Any district may choose not to offer these classes or to place greater restrictions on their high school students and/or on the courses offered than those provided here; that is the local district board’s prerogative.

- < Any course in which a pupil participates must be **approved by the local district** and must **generate credit** toward the pupil’s diploma in order to count toward the pupil’s membership.
- < This type of class is limited to **two courses per semester** per pupil. (If the pupil is taking more than this limitation, only two per semester will count toward the pupil’s membership.) In addition, the pupil must also concurrently be enrolled in and attending at least one course offered by the district in which credit is earned and regular attendance is required.

- < The **teacher-of-record** must be identified. The teacher-of-record may be the instructor associated with the virtual course and, therefore, may not necessarily hold a Michigan teacher certification. An **on-site mentor** must be assigned to the pupil and the *virtual* course who will be available to the pupil for assistance and to monitor the pupil's progress in the *virtual* course. The on-site mentor must be a certificated teacher employed by the school district. The on-site mentor would be responsible for reviewing any final exam or project that would indicate the pupil's success in the course. The course and the on-site mentor will appear on the pupil's class schedule (even if regular attendance is not required).
- < **Each course will count as one class** in the pupil's schedule and will generate that portion of an FTE membership that a comparable course offered by the high school would generate. This is similar to the pupil accounting for dual enrollment classes.
- < Because a pupil's enrollment in the course will generate state aid, the district is required to pay associated **tuition charges** for the course similar to the tuition requirement for dual enrollment as described in Section 21b of the State School Aid Act. A district may choose to provide more financial support than the minimum described in that section.
- < The pupil must enroll by and **be in attendance on the appropriate count day** (September or February) or during the 10-day / 30-day period during the class time designated for the course on the pupil's schedule. As with any pupil, actual attendance in at least one course during the school day is necessary to count toward the district or building's 75% attendance requirement.

**In summary**, the focus of this document is to provide minimum guidelines to be met in order to count pupils in membership for purposes of generating state aid and also for calculation of the pupils' full-time equivalency (FTE) in each situation. It must be kept in mind that **the majority of the decision-making regarding course quality and content, anticipated outcomes, approval of individual pupils to participate, and other issues that may be specific to a district or building will be the responsibility of the local district**, and that not all districts may choose to participate at this time. That is, any district may choose not to offer these classes or to place greater restrictions on their high school students and/or on the courses offered than those provided here; that is the local district board's prerogative.